

11 April 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Discussion with the Legislative Assistant to Senator Kuchel

1. While meeting with John Merriam, Legislative Assistant to Senator Thomas H. Kuchel (R., Calif.), on another matter, he asked whether there would be a "constitutional bar" to his receiving a briefing from the Agency either in his office or at Headquarters.

2. Merriam said he needed additional information in order to be of service to Senator Kuchel as he was not fully satisfied with what he was able to obtain from Defense or State. He said he formerly was a Foreign Service Officer and was aware of the general workings of the intelligence community and the problems facing both State and Defense. He has the highest regard for Agency information and evaluation of situations, but he did not specifically identify the basis for this conclusion.

3. Merriam said that a member of a Senator's staff has difficulty in getting in on the flow of information of interest to him because it is normally confined within key committees. He said he had discussed this general problem with Scott Cohen, of Senator Percy's staff, and they both faced the same problem. Merriam said he believed he held security clearances equal to those held by Thomas J. Scott, Chief Clerk, Senate Appropriations Committee.


4. Merriam also referred to the recent meeting between Mr. Helms and Senator Kuchel saying that the Senator had found this most helpful and wanted to do more of this with Mr. Helms.

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5. I told Merriam that I would check into the possibilities of briefing him, and asked what specific areas of interest were involved. He identified Pueblo and Vietnam, including the Haiphong Harbor situation. He agreed that the Pueblo was a matter of concern to the Department of Defense, but apparently he is not satisfied with what he has received from Defense to date.

6. It is quite apparent that Merriam's interest is to set up a channel for Agency briefings which he could use from time to time. I told Merriam that there was, of course, no "constitutional bar" and that it was our general objective to be as helpful as possible within the bounds of certain obvious rules, including the primacy of our congressional committees.


Office of Legislative Counsel

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